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LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA LAW FIRM EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO EMBEZZLEMENT

Woman embezzles \$313,000 from employer

Lafayette, Louisiana . . . MARIE FERDETTE ARNAUD CART, age 49, from Lafayette, Louisiana pled guilty in federal court yesterday before United States District Judge Richard T. Haik to mail fraud, announced United States Attorney Donald W. Washington.

CART was indicted in March 2006. Investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation determined that CART embezzled over \$300,000 from her employer.

In pleading guilty today, CART admits to stealing money from the attorney for which she was a long-term, trusted employee. CART was the office manager and bookkeeper for a sole practitioner law firm in Lafayette, Louisiana, since 19—. CART had check writing authority and was responsible for all incoming funds as well as paying all of the firm's bills. The attorney noticed a steady decline in his income over several years and became concerned about the firm's future. He enlisted the assistance of a CPA to audit his financial records hoping to find a solution.

The CPA found that there were more than 1,000 false entrees or fraudulent withdrawals from the law firm's six accounts. Further investigations found that CART used a number of different methods to embezzle money from the law firm's accounts over several years. In addition to the bank accounts, CART fraudulently used an American Express card which was thought by the victim to have been canceled long ago. CART utilized the credit card to make personal purchases, and had the monthly statement mailed to her personal mailing address. She then used the law firm's bank accounts to pay the American Express balance.

Sentencing will be scheduled for a later date to be determined by the Court. CART faces a term of imprisonment of not more than twenty years, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of not more than five years.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James T. McManus.

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